

University of Southampton



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A secondary initial teacher training
Short inspection report
2007/08

Managing inspector
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Introduction

The University of Southampton works in partnership with 75 schools to provide secondary initial teacher training (ITT) courses. It offers training in English, geography, history, information and communication technology (ICT), mathematics, modern foreign languages, music, physical education, religious education and science. At the time of the inspection there were 239 trainees.

Context

The inspection was carried out by a team of inspectors in accordance with the *Ofsted Handbook for the Inspection of Initial Teacher Training (2005-2011)*.

This report draws on evidence from a short inspection of the provision and an inspection of the management and quality assurance arrangements.

Grades are awarded in accordance with the following scale

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Main inspection judgements

Management and quality assurance: Grade: 2

The overall quality of training is at least good.

The next inspection of this provider will take place in accordance with the Initial Teacher Education Inspection Framework.

Key strengths

- the management of the course which supports good quality training and outcomes
- the strong stable partnership with schools
- the high quality content and delivery of the curriculum courses provided by well qualified staff
- effective selection procedures which result in the recruitment of good quality trainees in all subjects
- assessment procedures which ensure that trainees are assessed accurately against the Standards
- the good use of extensive internal and external data as part of the quality assurance procedures and to inform developments.

Points for action

- improving the delivery of the professional themes course at the university.

Points for consideration

- ensuring the consistent use of individual training plans to support trainees' development
- improving the evaluation of training by gathering information from all mentors
- focusing action plans more sharply on improving the training and on the outcomes for trainees.

The quality of training

1. The course meets the Requirements and is well designed to ensure that all trainees are given the opportunity to meet the Standards. Taken together, the professional and the curriculum courses provide a well balanced, coherent course. The quality of the university's training is generally good and this is translated by the partners into equally good quality training in schools.
2. The content of the curriculum courses is good and expertly weaves training in generic educational and subject issues. The *Every Child Matters* agenda, assessment for learning and inclusion are central to all training. The primary and post-16 placement experiences in phase 1 of the training are well used at the beginning of the course and help trainees to understand issues linked to transition into Key Stage 3 and out of Key Stage 4. Content is up-to-date, for example, the creative use of ICT in mathematics to provide experience of dynamic geometry and graphing software is included and, in history, the increased focus on literacy and other forms of communication.
3. The quality of the training in the curriculum courses is at least good. Tutors are passionate about education, their subjects and their trainees' success. They are well informed about current developments in their subjects and provide good models for trainees. Resources, including ICT are used well.
4. Curriculum mentors in partner schools know what is being taught in subject areas and blend this well with their own training and approaches. For example, in religious education the university's focus on different approaches to teaching is explored in different school settings.
5. The content of the professional themes course at the university is good. The topics covered are relevant to new teachers and well reflect current educational interests. Good examples are the early exploration of Every Child Matters, the nature of adolescence and the emerging 14 to 19 curriculum. However, the quality of delivery in professional themes lectures and seminars at the university varies considerably.
6. Professional themes programmes in schools are well linked to the university course and are highly valued by trainees. They are relevant and helpful and reflect school concerns and national issues. A good example is one school where topics covered range from the immediately practical such as the use of the school's computers to a consideration of the more intangible impact of school ethos.
7. Trainees' learning as they move towards meeting the Standards is well structured and suited to their individual needs. There is a strong focus on trainees, tutors and mentors identifying and addressing trainees' strengths and relative weaknesses. This begins at the selection stage when trainees offered places on the course are recommended to complete pre-course tasks to begin to address their needs. During the course, trainees' subject knowledge needs are identified and they receive good support in filling the gaps. For example, at the start of the science

course, there is an audit of trainees' subject and health and safety knowledge as well as ICT skills. Their needs are then very effectively addressed through lectures and workshops where they can get hands-on experience of applying their new knowledge and can share expertise and ideas.

8. A Standards assessment record is well-designed and leads to a clear record of trainees' progress towards meeting the Standards. Pen portraits, used at review points, are very clear and helpful in identifying trainees' strengths and areas for development. Individual training plans for school-based work help mentors plan to meet trainees' individual needs. However not all trainers and trainees fully understand how to use these.

9. The assessment of trainees' work is rigorous and is subject to moderation at different levels. There are good moderation procedures to ensure that the assessment of trainees against the Standards is accurate.

Management and quality assurance

10. Selection procedures are effective and result in the recruitment of good quality trainees in all subjects. Efforts are being made to raise the number of trainees from ethnic minority groups through, for example, investigating data on the number of applicants who proceed to selection and, of those interviewed, who are offered a place. The selection process includes a good range of relevant and subject focused activities. Reasons for withdrawals from the course are investigated; pass rates are good and a high proportion of trainees gain employment in schools.

11. The management of the course is effective and supports good quality training and outcomes. The PGCE steering group, membership of which includes both university and school representatives, is effective in both making decisions and supporting developments in the course. A staff-student liaison committee enables trainees to be involved in influencing the course provision and providing regular feedback of trainees' views. The course director leads the course effectively. Subject training is well led by curriculum tutors; they work productively with their colleagues and relevant experts from outside. For example, in science, the presence of a Science Learning Centre on the university campus provides opportunities for outside practitioners to contribute to the training.

12. Attention is given to rectifying issues necessary to improve the training. For example the shortcomings in the training in inclusion identified in the previous inspection report have been improved through several strategies including a strong focus on Every Child Matters. Another good feature, developed as a result of previous evaluations, is that incoming trainees are informed about which areas are to be developed. However, although some action has been taken in response to trainees' continuous concerns about the variations in the quality of both the lectures and seminars in professional themes, these have not been fully addressed.

13. There is a strong stable partnership with schools. In several subjects there is good involvement of mentors in the university training and in the further development of courses. Schools are being encouraged to work in clusters in order to share their training expertise. This is resulting in good quality school-based training in professional themes but a lack of funding is inhibiting the development of clusters.

14. A comprehensive PGCE entitlement document clearly details entitlements and roles and responsibilities. In schools, professional and curriculum mentors carry out their training roles effectively. Good documentation and effective communications supports them. There is regular training for both new and experienced mentors on relevant topics. Not all mentors attend regularly, despite the successful efforts made by the university in bringing about improvements. The challenge is made all the more difficult because of the significant turnover in teachers taking on the mentor roles. A working group has investigated this and action is planned to improve the situation further.

15. There are detailed procedures to ensure that the university's equal opportunities and race equality policies are followed and, where necessary, these are rigorously applied to address any issues which occur.

16. Extensive internal and external data are used effectively as part of the quality assurance procedures and to inform developments. For example, both data provided by the Training and Development Agency for Schools and internal data on trainees at entry and on course completion are carefully analysed and used to support the university's self-evaluation.

17. Trainees are given regular opportunities to evaluate both school-based and central training. Evaluations are largely positive and issues causing concern inform course development. A good feature is the summary of trainees' evaluations of school placements which is sent to the schools where they are used to identify how training might be further improved. Both professional and curriculum mentors have opportunities to provide informal feedback on the effectiveness of training, during mentor training sessions. However there are no arrangements for all curriculum mentors to evaluate the training if they fail to attend the mentor sessions. External examiner reports are, in almost all cases, helpful but not all provide advice on how to improve subject courses.

18. Annual reports and/or action plans in each subject and for the whole course begin with a review of the progress made on the previous year's action plan and draw on a careful analysis of all available evaluation data and the external examiners' reports. They identify strengths in the provision as well as providing a basis for the following year's action plans. Action plans are focused on relevant issues although improving the delivery of the professional themes course is not included. Success criteria lack a sharp enough focus on improving the training and on the outcomes for trainees.